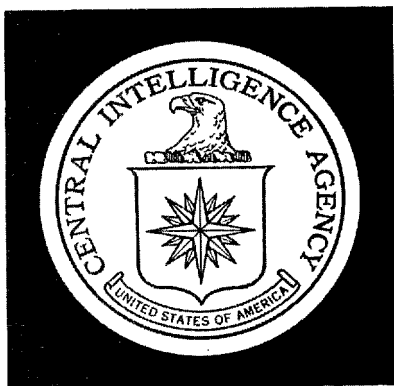




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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: No large-scale military encounters have been reported during the past 24 hours although Communist military pressure against the South Vietnamese Government's Revolutionary Development (RD) Program continues to be heavy in I Corps.

In the northern province of Thua Thien, three RD teams and a paramilitary unit were attacked on 17 April by an enemy force of undetermined size about four miles east of Hue. Sixteen RD workers were killed and 19 wounded. This incident was the latest of more than 200 enemy attacks against RD teams throughout South Vietnam this year; approximately half of the attacks have occurred in I Corps.

The intensity of the Communists' effort against RD workers in I Corps probably reflects the North Vietnamese Army's improved military posture in that area, and appears to be having some detrimental effect on northern I Corps RD cadre. There has been a decline in RD worker morale and an increasing rate of desertion and absenteeism. (Map)

South Vietnamese Political Developments: After a delay of several weeks, the South Vietnamese Government is today scheduled to launch the program of "national reconciliation" for individuals who abandon the Viet Cong.

The draft of the statement announcing the program has been greatly broadened over earlier versions and places strong emphasis on the Chieu Hoi defector program. Constitutional guarantees to defectors were also spelled out in some detail and, include a promise of full rights of citizenship, the possibility of government employment, and the right "to take part in elections."

USSR: The Communist nations have agreed to establish a communications satellite system open to worldwide membership.

According to a TASS announcement on 15 April, the agreement was reached at a conference in Moscow attended by representatives from Cuba, Mongolia, and all the Eastern European governments except Yugoslavia and Albania.

The agreement reflects the USSR's confidence in the Molniya experimental communications satellite and increases the likelihood that a system using Molniya or a successor will be placed in operation soon. The agreement probably is not meant as a direct challenge to the US-sponsored International Telecommunications Satellite Consortium (INTELSAT). There is even some evidence that the Soviets hope to link the two systems, thus gaining the use of INTELSAT's global coverage while enjoying the prestige of having their own "international" system.

Both Britain and France favor Soviet membership in INTELSAT, and the Soviets have shown interest in some form of affiliation. The British are organizing a global television broadcast to be relayed jointly by one Molniya and three INTELSAT satellites in June. This broadcast will test the feasibility of a linkup and could lead to worldwide television coverage of the anniversary celebrations in Moscow this November.

A tie-in of Molniya with INTELSAT would strengthen the hand of those INTELSAT members, such as France, which favor the creation of independent regional systems within INTELSAT.

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Britain - Far East: London has reopened the question of giving up its military bases in Singapore and Malaysia.

According to a senior Foreign Office official, the cabinet wants to leave the Southeast Asian mainland entirely by the mid-1970s. No firm decision to do so is likely, however, until after Foreign Secretary Brown's discussions at the SEATO meeting in Washington this week and Defense Secretary Healey's visit to Singapore and Kuala Lumpur on 22-28 April.

A British proposal in September 1965 to substitute for its own forces a US - UK - Australian - New Zealand force operating from facilities in Australia and on Indian Ocean islands was dropped after protests from the three governments. London's position has since been that British forces would stay on the mainland "as long as possible" and all along have expressed the belief that this would not continue far into the 1970s. The British have investigated alternative base sites in Australia and on Indian Ocean islands.

While London may be angling for US financial support of its Far Eastern forces, the proposal to pull out of Southeast Asia is consistent with the growing British desire to cut overseas commitments and concentrate on a European role.

The reduction of British forces in Singapore and Malaysia is continuing as scheduled following the end of Malaysia's confrontation with Indonesia. At the height of the confrontation, British forces in the area numbered about 56,000. Some already have left, and the withdrawal is expected to reach 15,000-20,000 by April 1968. There is to be a corresponding reduction in base facilities and in numbers of local employees.

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NOTE

Britain - South Arabia: Following an acrimonious exchange with the UN's Aden mission in London last weekend, British officials have concluded they must proceed without UN help in the search for a settlement in South Arabia. Although its hopes are faint, London is continuing efforts to arrange direct meetings with dissident Adeni nationalist leaders and is trying to win cooperation from Cairo. Foreign Secretary Brown or Minister of State Thomson will make an official visit to Cairo as soon as diplomatic relations are resumed, which London now expects will be in early summer.

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